DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 270 037 HE 019 351

AUTHOR Kavina, George; Pedras, Melvin J.
TITLE Higher Education Faculty as Role Models: A Perceptual Comparison between Students and Educators with Implications for the Improvement of Teaching and Educational Management.
PUB DATE Jun 86
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the International Seminar on Staff, Program, and Organizational Development (Witzenhausen, West Germany, June 24-29, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; Faculty Development; Higher Education; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Mentors; Questionnaires; *Role Models; Scholarship; Student Attitudes; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Influence; *Teacher Role; *Teacher Student Relationship

ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to determine whether professors as role models are part of the collegiate experience of the majority of students and what specific role models the faculty convey. Implications of findings for the improvement of teaching and management in higher education were also assessed. Students and faculty from the College of Education at the University of Nevada and the University of Idaho were studied. Student and faculty questionnaires were administered to undergraduate and graduate students and junior and senior professors. Four major role models were identified: academic, mentor, citizen, and friend. The academic model represented the academician and scholarly person, while the mentor was represented by a professor who was personally interested in students, could individualize programs and learning, and provide an exemplary personal model. The citizen model was someone who believed in community interaction and represented the academic profession outside the campus. Finally, the friend was seen as a warm and friendly professor who could casually talk with students and relate to them in an informal manner. Since both students and faculty agreed that the roles of professional educator and mentor were most important, staff development activities and other approaches to enhance these types of faculty involvement were recommended. Student and faculty questionnaires are appended. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED270037

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Melanie J. Perkins

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

HIGHER EDUCATION FACULTY AS ROLE MODELS: A PERCEPTUAL COMPARISON BETWEEN STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING AND EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

by

George Kavina, Ed.D.
University of Nevada
&
Melvin J. Pedras, Ed.D.
University of Idaho

It is well known in academe that college and university faculty play a crucial role in providing role models for students. In a broader sense Keating (1984) writes that the whole educational environment is permeated by the relationship of the students with their teacher. The meanings communicated in this relationship are often unspoken. It therefore seems plausible that in some instances neither student nor professor are aware of which role model is being conveyed.

Recent research shows that students personal growth is fostered when they come into contact with faculty who are

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

interested in them and encourage their professional development through contact in an academic setting (Erkut and Mokros, 1984; Levinson, 1978; Rowe, 1978). Research has also demonstrated that the role model, especially that of a mentor, can have a valuable, positive effect on a person's career (Phillips-Jones, 1982; Missirian, 1982). Mentoring is a way of individualizing a student's education by allowing or encouraging the student to connect with a college staff member who is experienced in a particular field or set of skills.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the role model in an academic setting is that people emulate models who are perceived to be similar to themselves (Erkut and Mokros, 1984). It is assumed that by demonstrating specific characteristics in a professional setting or role, college professors encourage students to emulate what they observe and internalize this into their own behavior. If college faculty demonstrate a strong commitment to good teaching and the improvement thereof, aspiring teachers most likely will also. If a strong belief in community service is conveyed this too may impress upon the student a commitment to service to the community and thus the professional role of college professor combined with active citizen. Addressing this issue Maley (1985, p.7) states that, "as teachers and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

educators, there is a great need for each of us to play a much more dynamic and effective role in political and community affairs." Finally, the role of mentor may be conveyed by college faculty as they seek not only to teach but also to guide, counsel, empathize, encourage or lead.

If, as research suggests, that professors as role models are part of the collegiate experience of the majority of students what specific role models do they in fact convey? Also, what are the faculty and student perceptions regarding these role models and what are the implications for the improvement of teaching and management in higher education? These are the questions which this study addressed.

Study Design

The study involved a representative sample of student majors in education on the campuses of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and the University of Idaho, Moscow. and all faculty on both campuses in the respective Colleges of Education. A total of 140 students were queried with a 100% response and 79 faculty with a 72% response. Data was tabulated and percentages computed for each questionnaire item. Two questionnaires were designed based on the concepts of numerous researches from (Bandura, 1969; Knowles, 1973; and Lortie, 1975). A sample of the student

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

questionnaire, faculty questionnaire, tabulated responses and student/faculty descriptions of role models can be found in the appendix.

Discussion

The results of this study indicated that faculty and students overwelmingly agreed that college professors must display a high interest in students and should model expected behaviors of a professional, especially a professional educator. Inherent in this was strong agreement among students that professors should provide ways for students to learn and show them how to take responsibility for their own learning. In terms of the learning process, it was strongly felt by students that professors should provide learning tasks at various levels of complexity and structure presumably to account for individual student differences in learning. Students strongly agreed that higher education faculty should respect them by listening and being open to their ideas, that they should convey learning by example, be able to relate lifes experiences, convey a love for learning, and provide for learning tasks that challenge students by virtue of various levels ofcomplexity and structure.

Faculty felt that it was important for them to share a basic trust with students, share opinions and ideas as well

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

as listen and respect student opinion. Professors also felt that they should provide students with a multitude of opportunities for the development of intellectual competence, communication skills and interpersonal skills.

Students and faculty grappled with issues that were not directly classified as academic but were considered important to the learning process. Among these were the college professors role as a mentor, advisor and friend.

Faculty felt that as mentors-advisors it was important for them to individualize student development unencumbered by age or timing requirements. They also strongly agreed that it was their role to facilitate developmental growth by supporting and challenging the students. Students felt that the role of the faculty mentor was to help them become actively involved in the planning and implementation of the learning experience. They also strongly agreed that a mentor should convey learning by example and that it would be an asset if the personalities of the mentor and student were compatible.

Faculty and students disagreed on the issue of goal setting. Faculty strongly felt that a mentor should structure goals for student learning while students indicated frustration with to many goals.

Faculty members, in general, agreed with students on the issue of friendship and out of class experiences. Faculty and students felt that it was somewhat unimportant

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

for them to interact with each other in a social setting but did agree that the structuring of out-of-class experiences were important.

The data discussed above together with the specific role models as reported by both faculty and students provides the categories listed below. Other categories could also be listed but the data showed these to be the most important.

ROLE MODELS

The study results indicated that both faculty and students strongly agreed upon several role models that should be conveyed by higher education faculty. The most frequently mentioned model by both groups was that of a professional, especially that of a professional educator which we will call the ACADEMIC. According to both groups, the qualities this person should model to students were a caring and capable conveyor of scholarship, active professional involvement, one who can generate excitement for and love of learning, a pursuer of knowledge and truth to be used for the benefit of mankind and one who can relate a quest for continual lifetime learning.

The model called MENTOR recurred in the literature frequently and was used as a bases for many questions asked

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

on the research instrument. This person or professor was seen by both groups as a person who was vitally alive in the profession and could model those extra personal qualities so important to students personal growth. The qualities identified included: an open mind, a high level of tolerance regarding differing points of view, understanding, rapport, a kind and caring individual, a good listener, a good advisor with a strong positive attitude, one who is interested in students career goals and helps them to achieve them, and an organized individual who can deliver quality instruction by relating life experience in an enthusiastic and energetic way.

The CITIZEN was another model identified by both groups and was seen by students as a professor who could model the qualities of a contributing member of our society and indicative of the profession he or she represents. The qualities to be displayed would include a modeling of excellence and rapport with people, a helpful person willing to give of his or her time and service outside of the academic community, a hardworking individual, one who can convey understanding of broad views regarding how a particular field relates to life in general, respect for other people, a christian lifestyle, and a leader that is responsible, honest and sincerely interested in people.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A final model category was that of a FRIEND. Predictably, this model was more important to students than to faculty possibly because professors understand that undo familiarity with students and their person lives can lead to later difficulties and possibly contempt. Professors identified only two qualities in this area; a warm, committed and concerned individual and one who could convey individual understanding and the encouragement of personal growth. Students used the word friend several times and expected professors to model exemplary behavior that they could follow. They indicated this person should be a mature, wiser person, albeit older, and be able to relate in a personable manner to them. They expected this person to "practice what they preach" in and out of the classroom. The setting of a good example and honesty, especially in giving feedback were identified qualities. Finally, this person was seen as someone that students felt comfortable with and could casually talk with in an informal manner.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

It appears from the foregoing data that students and faculty agree that college professors do indeed convey role models as they practice their profession. It does not follow, however, that students and faculty agree on the importance of each. Since both groups agreed that the role

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

of the professional educator and mentor were most important, it seems plausible that a concerted effort should be made to convey to faculty this projected model. This could be done through various staff development activities possibly involving students. This effort should receive administrative support and include administrators in a role-playing setting.

Since the provision of mentorships and the sponsoring of various kinds of internships is viewed as an important role in higher education, administration should restructure the organization; the way of accounting faculty load and change FTE formulas, to enhance this type of faculty involvement.

Opportunities should be made available to faculty so they can develop those qualities identified by the study. This could be done in the form of professional workshops, quality circles, peer interaction or any number of other professional activities. This, again must be enthusiastically supported by administrators especially those involved with staff development.

Finally, higher education faculty who can be identified as having those qualities which project one or more of the role models identified, should be approached and invited to meet and interact with colleagues. This should be done in a professional, non-threat setting and be understood by the

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

profession as a means of improving the professional performance of the college professorate.

CONCLUSION

The study was conducted for the purpose of determining whether professors as role models are part of the collegiate experience of the majority of students and if so what specific role models do they convey. A further purpose of the research was to determine the implications of the data for the improvement of teaching and management in higher education.

The study utilized students and faculty from the College of Education at the University of Nevada and the University of Idaho. The population included undergraduate and graduate students, junior and senior professors, and administrators. Two questionnaires were developed based on the literature and used to collect the data.

Based on the data collected and a review of literature, four major role models were identified as models conveyed to students by professors. These included the ACADEMIC, MENTOR, CITIZEN and FRIEND. The academic model represented the academician and scholarly person who was professionally involved and related a love for learning. The mentor model was represented by a professor who was personally interested in students, could individualize programs and learning, and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

provide an exemplar personal model. The citizen model was someone who believed in community interaction and represented his profession outside the academic community. Finally, the friend was seen as a faculty member who was warm, friendly and easy to talk to. This person represented a professor who could casually talk with students and relate to them in an informal manner.

The models listed were identified by students and professors of higher education as those most readily conveyed by professors as they practice their profession. It appears from the data that professors should be made aware of the types of models that they convey either by some from of staff development work or some other means of communications so that they understand the impact upon students. Perhaps professors can then more readily effect learning and help students place it into realistic perspective

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bandura, A. Principles of Behavior Modification. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.

Erkut, S. and J.R. Mokros. "Professors As Models and Mentors for College Students." American Educational Research Journal, 21:399-417, Summer, 1984.

Keating, J. "The Religion Teacher As Mentor-Friend." Momentum, 15:31-32, December, 1984.

Knowles, M. The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species, 2nd. Edition. Houston: Gulf Publishing Co., 1973.

Levinson, D.J. The Seasons of a Man's Life. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978.

Lortie, D. Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.

Maley, D. "Leadership and Professionalism: Needs and Responsibilities." The Technology Teacher, 44:7-10, September/October, 1985.

Missirian, A. The Corporate Connection. New York: Spectrum, 1982.

Phillips-Jones, L. Mentors and Proteges. New York: Arbor House, 1982.

Row, M. "Case of the Valuable Vendors." Harvard Business Review. 56:40-60, October, 1978.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HIGHER EDUCATION FACULTY AS ROLE MODELS

-Student Questionnaire-

by

George Kavina, Ed.D.
University of Nevada
&
Melvin J. Pedras, Ed.D.
University of Idaho

This survey instrument provides a series of statements regarding the impact that college faculty have had upon you as they practice their profession of teaching and advising. In an effort to help with the understanding of specific roles that higher education faculty project to students, especially that of mentor/advisor, may we solicit your cooperation in completing this questionnaire. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement and with respect to any or all of your college professors since you have been a student at any institution of higher education. Respond to each statement by indicating your level of agreement on a scale of 1 to 3. 1 indicates the lowest level of agreement and 3 the highest level. (1. Disagree, 2. Agree, & 3. Strongly Agree)

1 2 3

D A SA 1. It is important for a mentor to convey a personal interest in me.

D A SA 2. As a student in an adult learning situation, I prefer tasks at various levels of complexity & structure.

D A SA 3. Continuous feedback to me on my performance is essential.

D A SA 4. It is important for the mentor to help me learn things.

D A SA 5. It is important for me to be given responsibility for my own learning.

D A SA 6. It is important for a mentor to respect me by listening, accepting my ideas and allowing me to diagnose my needs.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

D A SA 7. It is important for a mentor to allow me direct participation in evaluation.

D A SA 8. It is important for a mentor to allow me to be actively involved in the planning and implementation of the learning experience.

D A SA 9. In a mentoring situation it is important for me to have a structured core program.

D A SA 10. In a mentoring situation it is important for me to be allowed divergence.

D A SA 11. Too many goals frustrate me.

D A SA 12. Having a mentor as an example is important to me.

D A SA 13. A mentor should convey learning by example.

D A SA 14. The essentials of a mentorship should be observable.

D A SA 15. The personalities of a mentor and student should be harmonicus.

D A SA 16. A college professor's role outside of the classroom or laboratory has a great effect upon me.

D A SA 17. It is important for me to view college faculty as members of the community.

D A SA 18. It is important for me to be able to interact with college faculty in a social setting.

D A SA 19. I seek out and talk with college faculty who seem to have a similar personality to mine.

D A SA 20. It is important to me for college faculty to share their personal experiences.

21. If asked to describe the most important role model that a college professor could convey to you what would that be?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HIGHER EDUCATION FACULTY AS ROLE MODELS

-Faculty Questionnaire-

by

George Kavina, Ed.D.
University of Nevada
&
Melvin J. Pedras, Ed.D.
University of Idaho

This survey instrument provides a series of statements regarding the impact that college faculty have upon their students. In an effort to help with the understanding of specific roles that higher education faculty project to students, especially that of mentor/advisor, may we solicit your cooperation in completing this questionnaire. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement and with respect to any or all of your college students since you have been a faculty member at any institution of higher education. Respond to each statement by indicating your level of agreement on a scale of 1 to 3. 1 indicates the lowest level of agreement and 3 the highest level. (1. Disagree, 2. Agree, & 3. Strongly Agree)

1 2 3

D A SA 1. It is important for a mentor to convey a personal interest in the student.

D A SA 2. As a mentor I share a basic trust with my students.

D A SA 3. As a college professor I share opinions and ideas with my students.

D A SA 4. A mentor complements rather than dominates the mentor-mentee relationship.

D A SA 5. A mentor creates a good working climate for a mentee

D A SA 6. As a college professor, I provide a considerable degree of complexity in learning tasks.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

D A SA 7. A mentor should utilize mutually agreed upon criteria when evaluating a student.

D A SA 8. As a mentor, it is important to individualize student development unencumbered by age or timing requirements.

D A SA 9. As a college professor, it is important to provide my students with a multitude of opportunities for attending to relevant behaviors to develop intellectual competence, communication skills and interpersonal skills.

D A SA 10. As a mentor, my role is to facilitate developmental growth by supporting and challenging the mentee.

D A SA 11. A mentor should structure specific goals for a mentee.

D A SA 12. As a mentor, I view the mentor-mentee relationship as being complementary.

D A SA 13. A mentor should convey learning by example.

D A SA 14. As a mentor, my role is to nurture and guide the mentee.

D A SA 15. The personalities of a mentor and student should be harmonious.

D A SA 16. A college profesor's role outside of the classroom or laboratory can have a great effect upon students.

D A SA 17. It is important for college faculty to convey various societal roles to students.

D A SA 18. It is important for college faculty to interact with students in a social setting.

D A SA 19. As a college professor, it is important to provide experiences for students outside of face-to-face meetings.

D A SA 20. It is important for college faculty to share their personal experiences with students.

21. If asked to describe the most important role model that you, as a college professor, can convey to students, what would that be?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE TOTALS AND PERCENTAGES

Total Students Responses	Question #	Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
140	1	8	6	50	36	82	58
139	2	1	1	78	56	60	43
140	3	13	9	62	44	65	47
139	4	9	6	62	45	68	49
139	5	3	2	56	40	80	58
138	6	2	1	59	43	77	56
140	7	21	15	85	61	34	24
137	8	24	17	75	55	38	28
138	9	31	22	70	51	37	27
141	10	2	2	95	67	44	31
140	11	53	38	59	42	28	20
137	12	16	12	75	55	46	33
137	13	7	5	59	43	71	52
136	14	10	7	88	65	38	28
139	15	47	34	72	52	20	14
138	16	78	57	46	33	14	10
137	17	42	31	72	52	23	17
137	18	71	52	53	39	13	9
137	19	48	35	64	47	25	18
137	20	39	29	69	50	29	21

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FACULTY QUESTIONNAIRE TOTALS AND PERCENTAGES

Total Faculty Responses	Question #	Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		#	%	#	%	#	%
57	1	1	2	14	24	42	74
56	2	0	0	20	36	36	64
56	3	0	0	10	18	46	82
56	4	1	2	13	23	42	75
56	5	0	0	15	27	41	73
57	6	3	5	21	37	33	58
56	7	11	20	20	36	25	44
56	8	6	11	22	39	28	50
55	9	1	2	12	22	42	76
56	10	2	4	9	16	45	80
57	11	10	18	27	47	20	35
56	12	2	3	24	43	30	54
57	13	1	2	18	31	38	67
57	14	3	5	18	32	36	63
57	15	17	30	29	51	11	19
57	16	6	11	24	42	27	47
55	17	14	25	27	49	14	25
57	18	23	40	20	35	14	25
56	19	5	9	28	50	23	41
56	20	9	16	30	54	17	30

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

STUDENT DESCRIPTIONS OF ROLE MODELS

A person who:

Is competent and knowledgeable in the teaching area
Is a humane instructor
Enjoys his field and can give practical examples
Is easy to get along with and has a sense of humor
Is a self-achiever and stays abreast of his/her field
Is a successful and experienced professional willing to relate experiences
Sets high standards and is academically demanding
Is a hard worker
Is a good advisor
Is a well respected and experienced citizen of the community
Is helpful
Is professional
Is open and honest
Displays a positive attitude
Conveys the value of education and has humanistic qualities
Is interested in students
Sets good examples
Displays respect for individual students
Is a role model
Is someone that students can casually talk with on an informal basis.
Exhibits fairness, assertiveness and aggressiveness in teaching
Teaches by example
Models excellence and has rapport with people
Practices what he/she preaches
Is enthusiastic and energetic
Is a friend
Is interested in students career goals and helps them attain those goals
Is an exemplar
Is organized
Can relate to students
Is an older, more mature and wiser friend
Has respect for students as people
Conveys understanding of broad views regarding how a particular field relates to life in general
Keeps current with ones field
Facilitates learning
Displays an inquiring mind
Displays life-long learning

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

FACULTY DESCRIPTIONS OF ROLE MODELS

A person who:

Exhibits flexibility, is open and sincere
Conveys scholarship
Conveys excitement for learning
Fosters student growth; intellectually and personnally
Is a caring and capable instructor
Is understanding and encourages personal growth
Is firm and fair
Is a pursuer of knowledge and truth, and believes in its use for the benefit of mankind
Is a competent professional
Is a leader that is responsible, honest and interested in people
Is a kind, caring human being
Exhibits a love of learning
Is a good example
Displays professionalism
Is a knowledgeable teacher with high instructional skills
Is an effective counselor and facilitator
Is warm, committed and concerned
Demonstrates alternative behaviors which generate self-searching
Can relate continual lifetime education
Displays a christian lifestyle
Is actively involved professionally

BEST COPY AVAILABLE